

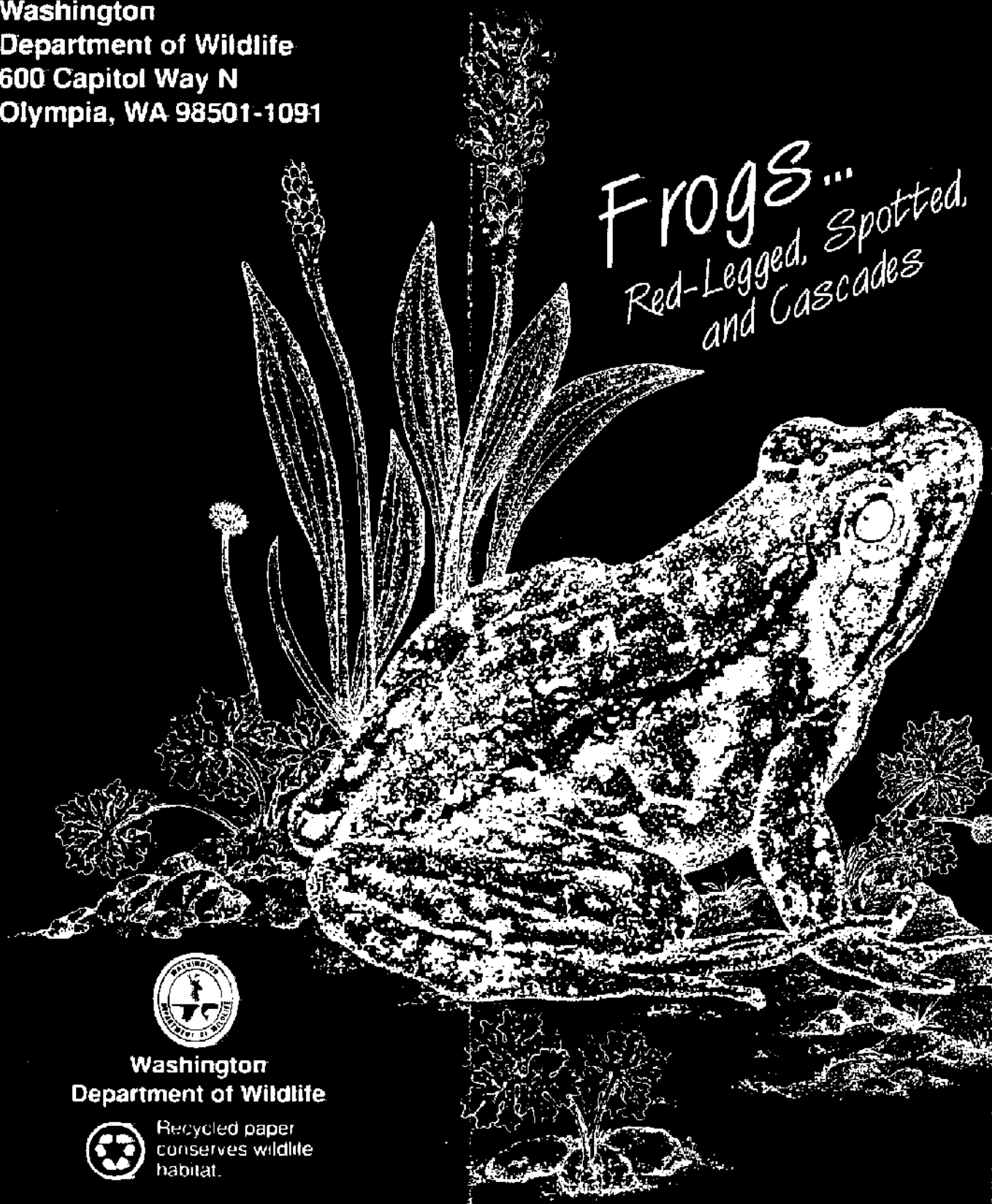
# **\*\*ATTENTION\*\***

*This document is provided for historical purposes only.*

*Documents contained in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Document & Publication Archive may contain dated and/or incorrect information. The WDFW Document & Publication Archive is provided as a service to those interested in the history of fish and wildlife management in Washington State.*

For more information contact:  
Nongame Program  
Washington  
Department of Wildlife  
600 Capitol Way N  
Olympia, WA 98501-1091

*Frogs...  
Red-Legged, Spotted,  
and Cascades*



Washington  
Department of Wildlife



Recycled paper  
conserves wildlife  
habitat.

## Red-Legged Frog



Red-legged frogs typically have few to many small black spots which sometimes run together forming an intricate pattern. Skin texture is smooth.



Adult red-legged frogs have red underlegs. Red often extends onto the abdomen. The red pigment appears to be deep beneath the surface of the skin.



Adult red-legged frogs have prominently mottled groins. The groin mottling consists of a black pattern and green-yellow in the remaining light areas.

## Spotted Frog



Spotted frogs typically have large, indistinct or fuzzy-edged spots with light centers. Skin surface has granular bumps and rough tubercles.



Adult spotted frogs have orange-red underlegs. Red pigment often extends onto the abdomen. The pigment is on the skin's surface, as though "painted on."

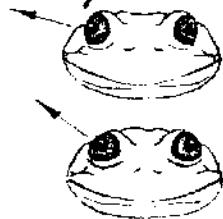


Spotted frogs typically lack mottling in the groin. Orange-red flecks or blotches are common. Unlike the other species, a greenish yellow tint is lacking.



Spotted frogs in some parts of the state have black or gray mottling in the groin, but it is less prominent than in red-legged frogs.

## Eye Orientation



Red-legged frog eyes are oriented outward.

Spotted frog eyes are oriented slightly upward.

## Toe Webbing



Toe webbing in red-legged frogs is reduced. When the toes are spread, the webbing dips in concave arcs.



Toe webbing in spotted frogs is usually quite full. When the toes are spread, the webbing goes almost straight across between toe tips.

## Cascades Frog



Cascades frogs typically have inky black spots with distinct edges. Skin texture can be rough, similar to that of the spotted frog.



Cascades frogs typically have yellow or honey-colored underlegs. The abdomen is yellowish and lacks dark pigment. Underleg coloring is occasionally orange.



Cascades frogs have moderately dark mottling in the groin. The mottling is less distinct than in red-legged frogs. A green tint is often present.

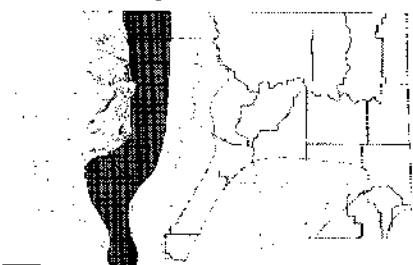
Photography by Bill Leonard

## Distribution

### Red-Legged Frog



### Spotted Frog



Western Washington distribution, historic

Eastern Washington distribution

### Cascades Frog



## Hind Leg Length Relative to Body length



Red-legged and Cascades frogs have long hind legs in proportion to their body size. Spotted frogs have short hind legs.

When either of the frog's hind legs is extended forward, straightening it at the knee, the position of the heel joint relative to the frog's nostrils provides another key to the species. Red-legged and Cascades frog's heels will reach to or beyond the nostrils. The spotted frog's heel will fall short of the nostrils.

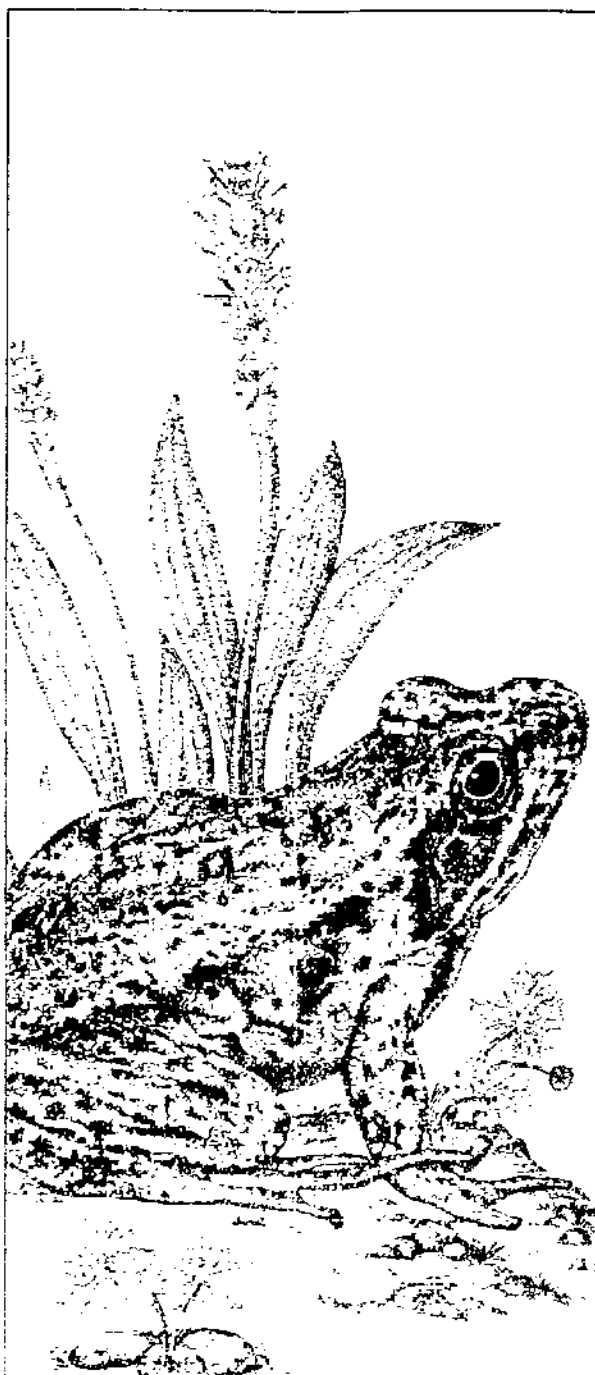
Illustrations by W.J. Hunter

# Distinguishing Between the Red-Legged, Spotted, and Cascades Frog

This guide is intended to help professional biologists and amateur naturalists contribute to our knowledge of the distribution and abundance of Washington's native frogs. Here, we provide information on distinguishing between three native species that can be difficult to tell apart unless you know what to look for.

The red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*), spotted frog (*Rana pretiosa*), and Cascades frog (*Rana cascadae*) are medium to large, rather brown frogs. They are closely related and very similar in appearance. However, close inspection of a live adult should always allow for accurate identification.

Vital to the user of this guide is the knowledge that there is considerable variation in appearance within each of the species described. The pictures in this guide provide a view of "typical" appearance. However, few individuals will be typical in all characteristics. Accurate identification requires consideration of all characteristics and the ability to recognize the best match.



## The Decline of the Spotted Frog

Herpetologists in the Pacific Northwest noticed the decline of the spotted frog over 25 years ago. Spotted frogs once inhabited large areas of Western Washington and Western Oregon. Today, they can be found in good numbers only east of the Cascade Mountains in these two states. The causes of the decline are unknown, but introduced bullfrogs and spiny ray fishes, as well as habitat loss, are among the leading theories.

Whatever the reason, the spotted frog appears to be gone from most formerly known localities in Western Washington. In fact, there have been few verified sightings of the species in Western Washington since 1940.

In 1990, a single female spotted frog was found in a spring-fed wetland near Olympia, WA. Attempts to find others here have so far failed. However, this discovery renews hope that wild populations still exist in Western Washington.